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Learning to Read Shakespeare

By RUTH STROUD

"Let's skip school today and in imagination go to London, the London of the sixteenth century." Thus the teacher begins her introduction to the study of Shakespeare in high school. Through her description, aided by a large map of London drawn on the blackboard, she and the students traverse the narrow, muddy streets of the old city. How curious are those half-timbered buildings with the upper story projecting far out into the street and how surprising to learn that this high perch is home for the shop-keeper who sells his wares below.

Harshly comes the blare of trumpets, and we crowd against the wall for safety as a royal procession goes by; now we dodge into a shop to keep from being run down by galloping horsemen or by cattle that are driven through the streets. We are amazed at the noise and din of traffic intermingled with calls of street vendors crying their wares. Hear the shouts of the grimy little chimney sweep, the "Tink, terry, tink" of the wandering tinker, the "Hot kidney pies" of the pieman, the tinkling bell of the muffin man, the "Lee-tle broom for lee-tle lady" of the broom girl, and loudest of all the shrill "Had-had-had-had-haddock, all fresh and good" of the proverbial fishwife.

One boy, that athlete in the class, climbs a wall along a side street, and, marry, there is a garden redolent of mint and bergamot and lavender and gay with blooming roses. He snatches a twig

Last year several themes about Shakespearean subjects were among the essays submitted for consideration as "Some of the Best Illinois High School Prose." Those written by the students of Miss Stroud at University High of Normal were unusually penetrating. "How do you do it?" the editor asked Miss Stroud. "Learning to Read Shakespeare" provides part of her answer. It is an appropriate beginning for this all-Shakespeare issue.

of rosemary—no doubt for remembrance—and runs to catch up with us as we head for that church at the top of the hill yonder. How queer to find that the porch of “Paul’s Church” is a market place where “butchers, bakers, and candlestick makers” sell their goods to people of all classes, while young gallants in silk and velvet linger about the bookstalls in the yard and ostentatiously display their newly acquired art of “drinking tobacco.”

Elbowing hard with the crowd, we break away from the scurvy mob hurrying toward Tyburn to see a hanging and avoid the loud rascals who call for company as they start for Bedlam to make sport of the poor mad creatures there. At last we hire a jolly knave to guide us across the Thames by way of old London Bridge to the Globe theater, where at two o’clock this afternoon we can see a play “fire new from the mint” by one Will Shakespeare. For is it not precisely for this that we have defied authority and run away from school?

And the curious old bridge, known to us already in rhyme and tale, is like a story book, for on each side of the double wagon road spanning the rapid river are rows of houses, shops, a bakery, a church, an inn, and the stalls of the famous pin and needle makers who draw trade from all London for their craft. How full of adventure it is to cross this dangerous thoroughfare on foot and dodge the heavy carts and coaches. Soon a few see that it is safest for foot passengers to take hold of the back of a wagon that is headed our way, or for two or three to join up temporarily with that band of strolling players, and yet others bravely pause to help a cattle drover with his herd until we all reach the Southwark end of the bridge and safety at the grim Traitors’ Gate.

Here across the muddy marsh we hurry to the hexagonal, three-story Globe theater and note as we go the thatched roof, where, from the “hut” on top, the trumpeter is already sounding warning blasts to say that the play is about to begin. Some students, after dropping a sixpence in the admission box, run to get standing room with the “groundlings” in the pit, where with the gray sky overhead and the beaten earth underneath, they jostle the loud and boisterous crowd. Others go to the more respectable first or second balconies, while still others pay the extra fee for a little stool on the corner of the stage and dare to join the flashily dressed dandies there.

So in some manner the teacher sketches the background. Now the play begins. If the students were watching the play on the stage, they would get the setting and the physical appearance of each character simply by looking. Therefore is it not the teacher’s

work, particularly in the early stages of teaching novices how to read a play, to describe the stage and to describe each important character upon his entrance? She makes them *see* the wild heath "in thunder, lightning or in rain" or the peaceful sunset scene before the castle at Inverness or the lonesome platform where a nervous sentinel, apprehensive of ghosts, hears the clock beat out the strokes of midnight, or the moonlit forest full of wild thyme and nodding violets where Puck frolics so gaily. As they read, the students verify these initial descriptions and from the author's words get a fuller picture and learn to visualize accurately and vividly.

Likewise in presenting the characters, the teacher from her intimate knowledge of the play gives the description but requires the students to verify and complete the picture as they read. Hamlet is the "sweet prince, the soldier, the scholar, the glass of fashion" but capable when his sensitive nature is offended of flying into a "towering passion." Watch for it. Juliet is a dark-complexioned maid of "true beauty" who has a characteristic radiance of countenance and a pretty habit of blushing. Notice the descriptive lines when people speak of her or to her. Bully Nick Bottom, "a sweet faced man," is fat, bossy, and a genius in using the wrong word. Read his lines carefully to get the fun.

So continually the teacher is guiding, exacting, requiring, explaining as she teaches the students to get, through reading, the action and meaning and beauty of a great play. For instance, she foresees certain difficulties that might arise in attempting to teach hearty boys and girls a play having much to do with fairies; therefore she emphasizes the dream idea. They speculate on the "fierce vexation" of dreams in general and anticipate the absurdity that may occur when Shakespeare decides to dream on St. John's Eve, for that was a festival night full of superstition when people built bonfires and stayed up all night to keep their souls from wandering from their bodies. Young men went to the woods to gather the fern seed which would give them invisibility, and young maidens spread a feast at midnight and waited for the appearance of their future husbands. The grace and fantastic foolishness of the play if presented as a dream will delight the freshmen, because for them "It gets sillier and sillier."

Among the many plays for high-school reading, *Romeo and Juliet* seems eminently suitable. The youthful characters, the story of love, the theme of "Wisely and slow; they stumble that run fast" are the very stuff of their own lives. They delight as sad and lovesick Romeo, together with his gay companions, "crashes"

the ball, falls in love with Juliet at first sight, "cuts in," dances off with her, then brings her back later so that the reader may hear the first witty love scene between them. A senior boy once wrote in a paper, "Juliet is just like a modern girl, only wittier." Perhaps he had sensed something of the miracle of writing in those eight pages of the first balcony scene—a scene, by the way, that perhaps half the class learns by heart each spring.

The seniors invariably love Hamlet better than any other of the Shakespearean characters they know. They learn in their careful reading to watch for those quick flashes that bring him back from his melancholy and permit the reader to see for a moment the idealistic young man who had lived so happily before his father's death. They like to follow him in that "beaten way of friendship" that is full of the joyous greetings and easy banter of college friends. "On fortune's cap we are not the very button"; "We'll teach you to drink deep ere you depart." They treasure his gentle courtesy in speaking to Bernardo, "Good even, sir," as he thus brings this unknown common soldier into the circle of friendly conversation. They like to hear this prince speaking to his best friend Horatio and expressing his sincere appreciation for this quiet, unobtrusive commoner "... that fortune's buffets and rewards hath ta'en with equal thanks." They read Hamlet's love letters to Ophelia and see a man not mad but madly in love, and to the students it seems natural that he should "reckon his groans" in a verse, however ill he is at such numbers. How cheap, they say, Laertes must have felt when idealistic Hamlet apologized to him.

Hamlet's idealism endears him to the seniors as it did to the "distracted multitude," and they see how such a person might easily win even pirates to his will. They delight that his glad welcome to the players speaks of long association and easy friendship between them, and right heartily they applaud Hamlet's command to Polonius, "Use them after your own honor and dignity: the less they deserve, the more merit is in your bounty." Hamlet, they say, not only knows players and is interested in acting, but he can quote long passages and, just like anyone, forgets occasionally and has to begin over again. Was it, they ponder, because he knew acting so well that he could daily put on that "antic disposition" with more method than madness?

Hamlet is already deep in gloom when the play begins, but as the students grow in power to read with attention, they glimpse the ideal young gentleman who was happy and set him beside the suffering prince in "inky cloak." By learning to recognize these fleeting indications of former or potential happiness the

students begin to read tragedy with fuller comprehension, for as Santayana points out, "One of the chief charms that tragedies have is the suggestion of what they might have been if they had not been tragedies."

One of the best and most permanent results from the study of Shakespeare in youth is the hundreds of lines the students choose to lock in memory. Each one agrees, after a bit of cajoling from the teacher, to quote at least one line at the beginning of every class hour. Soon, however, this work catches fire and extends to long passages, scenes, or even acts. They love to startle each other with their power of conquering long passages, and they are amazed to discover that Shakespeare is so well known outside the class. One morning a boy ran in before school to ask the teacher if she had noticed how people had begun to quote Shakespeare over the radio lately.

Lively boys, these "shag-haired villains," have considerable fun sometimes practicing "with swaggering accent sharply twanged off" such saucy expressions as "Zounds," "God's bodicans," "Sneck up," "Go shake your ears," and with such new epithets to apply to each other as "serpent heart," "whey face," "pestilent knave," "fiend angelical." How willingly gay, eager students pick these up without any goading from the teacher, and, of course, they pass without reproof. For did not Shakespeare teach us that in a succession of dismal scenes there must be some light-heartedness?

The usual theme comes at the close of each play (it is more effective to read two or three plays in succession), and the seniors usually select their topics for writing long before the class discussion comes to a close. In this way each person can have time to think about his problem and watch for clues or supporting evidence or lines to quote. An interesting subject for one boy was to show how Shakespeare even in the midst of tragedy let the servants have a good time, as indicated by such lines as the following: "Save me a piece of marchpane, and as thou lovest me, let the porter let in Susan Grindstone and Nell" and "Faith, sir, we were carousing till the second cock."

Another student wrote an essay entitled, "I Have Heard of Your Paintings," in which she showed that Shakespeare disliked for women to paint their faces. She supported her idea with such quotations as the following: "Tell her to paint an inch thick, to this favor she must come"; "How low am I, thou painted maypole"; "Excellently done, if God did all"; "'Tis in grain, sir, 'twill endure wind and weather"; and "... gross painting might be better used where cheeks need blood."

Another student read Gordon Bottomley's poetic play *Gruach*, which portrays the romantic meeting and elopement of Macbeth and Gruach, later Lady Macbeth, and showed how true the portrayal was to Shakespeare. Other topics that have brought the seniors pleasure in writing are "Snapshots of the Happy Hamlet," "Hamlet the Commoner," "The Succession of Events that Brought About Macbeth's Downfall," "The Gentle Lady Macbeth," "Saul and Macbeth," and "They Stumble That Run Fast."

The reading may be enhanced by the use of recordings, movies, dramatizations, and by trips to the campus of the University of Illinois to see a Shakespearean play on that interesting replica of the old Elizabethan stage. But our main tasks are to teach the boys and girls how to read a play—truly to wrest the magic from the printed page—and then how to write their own thoughts about it in interesting and effective English.

FALL MEETING

Remember Friday, October 26, and Saturday, October 27. Those are the dates for the fall meeting of the I.A.T.E. This year, as last, the College of Education and the Department of English of the University of Illinois have joined the I.A.T.E. in sponsoring the program.

Meet your English-teacher friends at the Illini Union Building in Urbana at five o'clock Friday afternoon. Highlights of the program include:

Friday dinner in the Union, at 6:30. (A loaf of bread, a slice of meat, and thou.)

Music. (Hath charms, even for non-savages.)

Two talks by poet-teacher Paul Engle. (This is truth the poet sings.)

Coffee hours. (A friend is another I.)

A summary of significant recent research in English and American literature. (The most seductive of professions.)

A barbed warning to English teachers. (He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.)

A panel discussion of curriculum problems. (The world is too much with us.)

Business meeting. (Despatch is the soul of business.)

Saturday luncheon. (It is good for us to be here.)

Send your request for dinner and luncheon reservations to Harold Trimble, 109 Gregory Hall, University of Illinois, Urbana.

Shakespeare: To Be or Not To Be?

By LOUIS BALDWIN

Recently, in a letter from the school department of one of the country's largest publishing houses, I was informed that the nation's high schools are exhibiting "a steadily diminishing interest" in Shakespeare. There certainly seems to be little or no evidence, at the high-school or college level, to refute that statement. To those of us who still believe that an acquaintance with Shakespeare can do almost as much for a student as desultory training in fancy carpentry, basketweaving, or handstands, the growth in indifference or antipathy to the Bard constitutes a highly undesirable trend.

The trend, however, is not an unnatural one. It has become not uncommon in undergraduate literature courses to pass by Chaucer with a few respectful, eulogistic remarks rendered in the tones of a tourist guide at Grant's tomb, or to accord "Whan that Aprille" a brief, wary and reluctant glance, simply because Middle English contains more things than are dreamt of in the average undergraduate's philology. Surely the student cannot be blamed for relishing the study of Chaucer about as much as he would relish the study of Goethe in the original German.

If Shakespeare is headed for the same fate, perhaps something should be done to thwart destiny. Two things have already been done, presumably for this purpose: some editions offer running explanation in copious hermeneutic footnotes, and others present the more pedestrian segments of the plays in prose form, leaving only the "best known" passages in the original verse. But neither of these methods seems to have worked, perhaps because the second is evisceration and the first allows Shakespeare's lines to degenerate into a series of puzzles with the answers at the back of the book or the bottom of the page.

What else can be done? Fearful of the slings and arrows of the Ancient Order of Bardolaters, I hesitate to make the suggestion openly. It may be the better part of valor simply to imply

Both the editor and the author (who is assistant professor of English at DePaul University) expect sparks to fly as a result of this article. What do *you* think about the need for a simplified version of Shakespeare? Address your sparks to either the editor or the author (the latter at DePaul University, Chicago 1).

the suggestion, in the remainder of this article, by submitting excerpts from *Hamlet*, arranged in ascending order of general familiarity. For those interested in pursuing this subject, comparison with a standard edition will, I hope, illustrate what I mean.

* * *

ACT I, SCENE 1.

[Elsinore, Denmark. A platform before the royal castle. It is midnight. Francisco, a soldier on guard, is pacing up and down at his post; Bernardo, an officer, enters and approaches him.]

Bernardo: Who's there?

Francisco: No, you tell me. Stand and reveal yourself.

Bernardo: Long live the King!

Francisco: Bernardo?

Bernardo: Yes.

Francisco: I see you're very carefully on time.

Bernardo: It's twelve o'clock. Go, get to bed, Francisco.

Francisco: Thanks for this relief. It's bitter cold,
and I am sick at heart.

Bernardo: Did you have a quiet watch?

Francisco: Not a mouse stirred.

Bernardo: Well, good night.

If you should meet Horatio and Marcellus,
my partners in this watch, tell them to hurry.

[Two men come up on the platform. One is Marcellus, an officer; the other is Horatio, a friend of Prince Hamlet, son of Denmark's late King Hamlet.]

Francisco: I think I hear them. Stand, ho! Who is there?

Horatio: Friends of this land.

Marcellus: And subjects of the King.

Francisco: Well, then, good night.

Marcellus: Good-bye, honest soldier.

Who has relieved you?

Francisco: Bernardo has my post.

I bid you good night.

[He leaves.]

Marcellus: Hello, Bernardo!

Bernardo: Say—

What, is Horatio here?

Horatio: A part of him.

Bernardo: Welcome, Horatio. Welcome, good Marcellus.

Marcellus: And has this thing appeared again tonight?

Bernardo: I have seen nothing.

Marcellus: Horatio says we only fancy it.

He refuses to believe in my report

on this dread sight that we have both seen twice.
And so I have invited him along
with us, to watch the passing of this night;
thus, if the apparition comes again,
he can confirm our eyes, and speak to it.

Horatio: No, no, it won't appear.

Bernardo: Sit down a while,
and let us once again assail your ears,
which are so fortified against our story,
with what we've seen on two nights.

Horatio: Let's sit down.
and listen to what Bernardo has to say.

Bernardo: Just last night,
when that star to the west had run its course
to light the heavens at the very place
where it now burns, Marcellus and myself—
the bell was striking one—

[The Ghost appears.]

Marcellus: Peace! Break off! Look, there it comes again!

Bernardo: In the very form of dead King Hamlet.

Marcellus: You're educated—speak to it, Horatio.

Bernardo: Doesn't it look like the King? Notice, Horatio.

Horatio: Very much. It pierces me with fear and wonder.

Bernardo: It wants to talk.

Marcellus: Question it, Horatio.

Horatio: What are you that usurp this time of night
in that splendid military dress
in which the majesty of the late King
has often marched? By heaven, I charge you, speak!

Marcellus: It is offended.

Bernardo: Look, it stalks away!

Horatio: Wait! Speak, speak! I charge you, speak!

[The Ghost disappears.]

Marcellus: It's gone and will not answer.

Bernardo: Well, now, Horatio? You tremble and look pale.
Isn't this more than mere imagination?
What do you think of it?

Horatio: Before my God, I'd not believe in this
without the true and visual evidence
of my own eyes.

Marcellus: Isn't it like the King?

Horatio: As you are like yourself.
That was the very armor that he wore

when he warred on Norway's ambitious king.
He frowned so when, in grim conclave, he struck
the Pole from his great sled onto the ice.
It's strange.

Marcellus: So twice before, and at this very hour,
with military pace he passed our guard.

Horatio: For what special purpose I don't know.
Yet in my general opinion,
this bodes some strange disaster to our state.

Marcellus: Well, now, sit down, and tell me—he who knows—
why does this strict and over-cautious guard
nightly annoy the subjects of this land?
Why are so many cannon cast each day?
Why all this trade in war materiel?
And why this draft of shipwrights, whose work now
does not distinguish Sunday from the week?
What does it mean, all this sweating haste
that makes the night co-worker with the day?
Which of you can inform me?

Horatio: That can I.
At least, the whispers go thus. Our late King,
whose image has just now appeared to us,
was, as you know, challenged to combat by
the former King of Norway, jealous, proud
old Fortinbras. And so our brave King Hamlet
(for this part of our world esteemed him brave)
killed him. By a previous agreement,
supported with tradition and by law,
Fortinbras, at death, forfeited to
his conqueror all lands he had acquired.
Against this our late sovereign had pledged
a comparable stake, which would have been
turned over to the lands of Fortinbras
if he had won—as now by the same token
(and in accord with the agreement signed),
his went to Hamlet. Now, sir, young Fortinbras,
of yet untested mettle, hot and wild,
has, on the edges of Norway here and there,
whipped up a band of resolute outlaws
whom he maintains for an undertaking
that has some courage in it. It is no less
(and this appears quite clear to statesmen here)
than to recover from us, by force of arms

and dictatorial terms, those selfsame lands which his father lost. So this, I take it, is the main purpose of these preparations, the reason for our guard, and thus the source of all the haste and hustle in the land.

* * *

ACT I, SCENE 2.

[A royal court in the castle. On a dais sit Claudius, King of Denmark, who succeeded to the throne after his brother Hamlet's untimely death, and Gertrude, Queen of Denmark, widow of the dead King Hamlet, mother of Prince Hamlet, and now wife of King Claudius. Standing about in attendance on the royal couple is a group of courtiers, including Prince Hamlet (dressed in mourning); Polonius, the Lord Chamberlain; Laertes, his son; and two courtiers named Voltimand and Cornelius.]

King: Though of our* dear brother Hamlet's death
 the memory is green, though it is right
 we bear our heart in grief and our whole kingdom
 wear a brow contracted with this woe,
 yet so far has discretion fought with nature
 that we, with wisest sorrow, think of him
 together with remembrance of ourself.
 Therefore we have wed our former sister,
 now our queen and partner in our reign,
 so to speak, with a defeated joy—
 with one sparkling and one drooping eye,
 with joy in funeral and dirge in marriage,
 equally matching gaiety and grief.
 Nor have we tried to shun or disallow
 your own good judgment, which has freely gone
 along with this affair. To all, our thanks. —
 Now, as you are aware, young Fortinbras,
 having a poor opinion of our worth
 or thinking that our late dear brother's death
 has left our state disorganized and weak,
 dreams that he sees his opportunity.
 He has not failed to plague us with demands
 that we surrender all the territories
 that his father lost, all legally,
 to our most valiant brother. So much for him.

* The King is using the royal "we," since this is a formal speech.

Now, our response—and reason for this meeting.
This is the business: we have written here [He holds
out a document.]

to Norway's king, uncle of Fortinbras—
who, weak and ill, knows hardly anything
about his nephew's purpose—to suppress
the youth's activities, since the conscriptions
and the taxes are all gotten out
of Norway's realm. And we here dispatch
you, good Cornelius, and you, Voltimand,
as bearers of this message to the King,
but granting you no more authority,
in dealing with him, than the articles
of this extensive document allow. [He hands them the
document.]

Farewell. Let haste prove your fidelity. [They take it,
bow, and leave.]

* * *

Queen: Do not forever, with your eyes cast down,
seek for your noble father in the dust.
You know—it's common—all that lives must die,
passing through nature to eternity.

Hamlet: Yes, madam, it is common.

Queen: If it is,
why does it seem so singular with you?

Hamlet: *Seem*, madam? No, it *is*. I know no "*seems*."
It is not only my jet cloak, good mother,
nor suits conventional of solemn black
nor windy expirations of forced breath,
no, nor the gushing river in the eye
nor dejection of the countenance—
it's not such forms and mere displays of grief
that can portray me truly. These may *seem*,
for they are only parts a man might act.
But what I have within surpasses show—
these are the trappings and the suits of woe.

* * *

Hamlet: Oh, that this too, too solid flesh would melt,
thaw, and dissolve itself into a dew!
Or that the Everlasting had not fixed
His law against self-slaughter! Oh, God, God!
How weary, stale, flat and unprofitable
seem to me all the ways of this base world!

Fie on it! Oh, fie!—unweeded garden
 that goes to seed—things rank and gross in nature
 alone possess it. That it should come to this!
 Just two months dead! — no, not so much, not two.
 So excellent, that king, who was to this
 as Hyperion to a satyr — who so loved
 my mother he'd prevent the winds of heaven
 from touching her face too roughly. Heaven and earth!
 Must I remember? Why, she so cherished him
 that it seemed her appetite had grown
 with what it fed on. Yet, within a month—
 I must not think of it. Frailty, your name is
 woman!—

A little month!—before those shoes were old,
 in which she followed my poor father's body
 like Niobe, all tears. Why, she—yes, she—
 oh, God! a beast that lacks the use of reason
 would have mourned longer—married my uncle—
 my father's brother, but no more like my father
 than I'm like Hercules. Within a month,
 before the salt of her unrighteous tears
 had left the water in her reddened eyes,
 she married. Oh, most wicked speed, to rush
 with such celerity to incestuous sheets!
 It is not good, and cannot come to good.
 But break, my heart, for I must hold my tongue!

* * *

Act III, Scene 1 (line 56)

Hamlet: To be, or not to be*—that is the question:
 whether it's nobler, in the mind, to endure
 the bolts and arrows of outrageous fortune,
 or to take arms against a siege of troubles
 and, by opposing, end them. To die. To sleep—
 nothing more; and in this sleep to end
 the heartache and the thousand natural ills
 that flesh inherits. It is a consummation
 devoutly to be wished. To die—to sleep.
 To sleep!—perhaps to dream! Ah, there's the rub.
 The thought of dreams that sleep of death my bring,
 when we have shuffled off this mortal soil,
 must make us pause. There is the thought

* That is, to live or not to live.

that gives misfortune such continuance.
For who would bear the whips and scorns of life—
the oppressor's wrong, the proud man's arrogance,
the pangs of despised love, the law's delay,
official insolence, and the rebuffs
that patient merit takes from the unworthy—
when he himself might bring about his end
with a drawn dagger? Who would bear his load,
to grunt and sweat throughout a weary life,
except that the dread of something after death—
that undiscovered country from whose realm
no traveler returns—dazes the will
and makes us rather bear those ills we have
than fly to others that we do not know?
Thus does conscience make cowards of us all.
And thus the natural hue of resolution
is sicklied over with the pale shade of thought,
and vigorous, important enterprises,
with these considerations, veer away
and lose the name of action.

Making Shakespeare Enjoyable

By LORABEL RICHARDSON

I offer these notes quite aware that there is nothing new in them to experienced teachers and nothing which I have any claim to discovering, but they may reassure younger teachers that Shakespeare need not be dissected too painfully.

The longer I experiment with Shakespeare for high school, the more convinced I am that students' understanding and enjoyment depend on the speed with which a play can be read. Shakespeare becomes tiresome in the classroom because the life and continuity of a play are destroyed by its being chopped into little "lessons." To secure speed, the teacher will have to do all the hard work herself, reading to the class and letting students relax and listen. I cut the sacred bard's lines ruthlessly and fearlessly when he becomes too Elizabethan for my audience, and I often substitute a familiar word for an obsolete one though "the blank verse shall halt for it." Necessary explanations and interpolations can be kept short and simple, so that the show goes on at a good smart pace. If assignments must be made for outside preparation, they can consist of scenes which are easy to read; usually mere "plot scenes" alternate with the more important and difficult scenes. It seems to me that young readers can hardly be expected to read Shakespeare for themselves until they have had the experience of visualizing, understanding, and enjoying at least one of the plays. Even seeing a play on the stage or screen does not replace reading with enjoyment, though a performance should by all means be seen as soon as possible. For poor readers, then, the play becomes a story-hour and Shakespeare is not a half-bad fellow—they might even spend some money to see him in the movies. For able readers, the next step is natural—they soon learn to use notes intelligently, conquer obsolete words, and get satisfaction out of reading independently. All this sounds very rosy, but it is my honest belief, based on experience, that the results justify optimism.

How about "student activity," that watchword of our profession? Of course every student must get a chance to express

To the growing number of periodicals published by state associations of teachers of English, the I.A.T.E. welcomes the *Iowa English Bulletin*, published by our neighbors with the same initials as ours. From Volume 1, Number 1, of that publication has been drawn this concluding article in our Shakespeare issue. Miss Richardson teaches in Marshalltown, Iowa, Senior High School.

himself in discussions of the play, and these discussions should come whenever the class members seem to want them, and not be a set exercise. Each student ought to choose some fine lines and passages to read aloud, in order to get the feel of the splendid words in his own mouth. If he wants to memorize lines of his own choosing, so much the better. If students really enjoy a play, their activities will be voluntary and to some degree original. I recently had a sophomore boy, a very poor English student, who sketched five or six scenes from *Twelfth Night* while he sat listening to the play, and his classmates acclaimed his crude but vivid drawings in a way that warmed one's heart. If the class shows enthusiasm for it, I like the old device of reading certain scenes by assigning parts to different students, but only if this method really makes clear the meaning, as it does in such scenes as the funeral in *Julius Caesar* or the trial in *Merchant of Venice*.

How about "evaluation," that other bugbear of our lives? Like the Walrus and the Carpenter, who took the little oysters for a nice ramble and then ate them, I coax my flock into the pleasant land of Shakespeare and then turn upon them and administer very stiff and comprehensive tests. You may agree with the little oysters that "After such kindness that would be

A dismal thing to do."

But the objective tests after the reading of each act can be planned to take very little time and to be a stimulus to good listening. For review on a whole play I like questions that require essay or paragraph answers and let a pupil show that he has done some thinking as well as some good listening.

The list of classroom motion pictures for Shakespeare is very short, but more may soon be available. It is easy to accumulate magazine and newspaper pictures of scenes and players from stage and screen productions, pictures in color if possible. Maurice Evans and Laurence Olivier in the full glories of Elizabethan costume can glamorize a bulletin board beyond all belief. Then there are the Hamlet recordings made by those actors, and the Mercury Theatre albums for *Julius Caesar*, *Macbeth*, *The Merchant of Venice*, and *Twelfth Night*, besides many good records of songs and scenes from various plays.

Which plays shall we use in high school? I like *Twelfth Night* for reading to my sophomores; as an introduction to Shakespeare it almost invariably "sells" him even to some very unlikely customers. *Taming of the Shrew* does well too in a streamlined version for reading aloud. We use a slightly shortened version of *Julius Caesar*

for tenth grade, with the text of the play read by the students, and it seems to stimulate thinking about some political truths that have never been made real to the pupils before. My own experience with *The Merchant of Venice* has been that Shylock's speeches to Antonio need little comment; they appeal to students' sense of justice and rouse their sympathy for the victim of prejudice. Juniors in our school read *Macbeth*, and seniors read *Hamlet*. Before a local theatre showed the Olivier film *Henry V*, our students heard a shortened reading of the play and were smugly sorry for certain adults in the audience who, they said, evidently did not understand the movie. I have had only moderate luck with *As You Like It*. The tradesmen's play from *Midsummer Night's Dream* permanently dispels the notion that Shakespeare is stuffy and solemn.

We may, just among ourselves, admit the truth—Shakespeare has suffered from dull teaching. Some teachers have tried to use methods more suited to college study of the drama than to young people's reading of a story. Others have themselves failed to visualize the plays because they have lacked opportunities to see the plays performed. With so many good productions of Shakespeare by college players, so many stage productions taken on tour, and the recent superb films, we should all find our teaching of Shakespeare much improved.

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